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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: OMAN MEDIA REACTION: MORE PUBLIC STATEMENTS ON TIP;  
INDIVIDUALS EXPRESS DISAGREEMENT

REF: Muscat 454

11. SUMMARY: Press coverage of TIP continued at the same elevated level reported in refTel, with over a dozen articles appearing in English and Arabic since Monday, June 16. On Tuesday, June 17, the Oman Journalist Association (OJA) issued a statement, carried in all dailies, in line with other official and semi-official statements issued to date. Wednesday, the Secretary General of the GCC issued his own statement, saying, "The Sultanate's stand reflects its strong and clear vision... I call upon the U.S. State Department to review its unfriendly policies towards GCC countries." Today, state-owned daily "Observer" and private daily "Times of Oman" ran articles interviewing south Asian and western expats, who add their voices of support to Oman's TIP rejection. END SUMMARY.

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OJA: "The Bright Record of the Sultanate"  
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12. On Tuesday, June 17, English and Arabic dailies all ran coverage of a statement issued by the Oman Journalist Association voicing its rejection of Oman's tier 3 TIP rating. Private English language daily "The Tribune" (circulation 8,000) said in "Oman Journalists Association Assails US Report":

"The Omani Journalists Association issued a statement condemning...the 'false allegation that the Sultanate is not taking enough measures to combat human trafficking.' The statement said that the report did not reflect the bright record of the Sultanate that had been recognized by international prestigious organizations known for their credibility and being away from political blackmailing. The statement also said: 'The basic statue of the state secures dignity for locals as well as expatriates. While the reports are subjective and selective, they spoil the relations between countries do not serve communication and dialogue among cultures. They rather create animosity and hostility. The Omani Journalists Association, which is one of the Omani civil society organizations, renews its rejection and condemnation of such unfair report, especially when work is under way to create special legislation on human trafficking, which is an international phenomenon.'"

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Al Attiya: The Sultanate's "Strong and Clear Vision"  
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13. On June 17, private Arabic daily "Al Watan" (circulation 42,000) and private English language daily "The Tribune" (circulation 8,000) published an exclusive statement by GCC Secretary General Abd al-Rahman bin Hamad al-'Attiya. According to "GCC Backs Sultanates Rejection of US Report":

"Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Abdulrahman Al Attiyah

has supported the rejection letter handed by HE Sayyid Badr al Busaidi to the U.S. ambassador to the Sultanate. In a statement to the Tribune, Attiyah said the GCC supports the Sultanate's rejection of the false allegations made in the report. The Sultanate's stand reflects its strong and clear vision. The unjustified reports have political motives. I call on the US State Department to review its unfriendly practices towards GCC countries."

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"There is nothing like what is cited in the report"  
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14. On Saturday, June 21, state-owned English language daily "Observer" (circulation 20,000) and private English language daily "Times of Oman" (circulation 25,000) ran articles based on interviews with south Asian and western expats stating satisfaction with life in Oman and disagreement over the TIP report. Block quotes as follows:

"It is almost 25 years since I first came to Oman. Initial concern over living and working conditions quickly gave way to the realization that the local people are very warm and friendly, respectful to expatriates and have an excellent sense of hospitality."

"The wave of resentment unleashed in the Sultanate over the recent US report on human trafficking seems to be strong, with even Americans in the country frowning at the report. 'Oman is a very tolerant country, with proper laws and measures in place to prevent human trafficking,' says an American who has been living in the Sultanate for the last seven years. 'I'm not sure how and why the U.S. has come up with such a report.'"

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"'Oman is a very fair and free country. There is nothing like what is cited in the report,' says an Indian expatriate who has been living in Muscat for the last 25 years. 'I am really amazed by the report. I don't know what basis they are assessing all these things. I would say this country is one of the most peaceful and tolerant in the world.'"

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